

Bipartisan measures will increase transparency, openness in government and political campaigns; Bill now awaits Senate approval before heading to the President's desk

Washington, DC - The U.S House of Representative today passed sweeping ethics reform legislation aimed at curtailing the influence that federal lobbyists wield over legislation, legislators, and political campaigns. Supported by 12th District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah), the measure will also increase public reporting and disclosure of a Congressman's fundraising and Congressional travel.

"Sunshine is the best disinfectant," Barrow said. "For too long, when the public has called for ethics reform, Congress has responded with only lip service.

Today, the new Congress put some bite into that bark."

Passing the House of Representatives by an overwhelming vote of 411-8, the *Honest Leadership, Open Government Act of 2007*

(S. 1) is the most comprehensive lobbying reform measure to pass Congress in a generation, and has been hailed by reform groups as a "sea change for citizens" and "landmark reform."

Specifically, the legislation:

- Denies taxpayer-funded pension benefits to members of Congress convicted of corruption while serving the American people.
- Requires sitting members to disclose job negotiations for post-congressional employment and to recuse themselves in cases of conflict of interest.
- Establishes an online, searchable public database of member travel and personal financial disclosure forms.
- Establishes an online, searchable public database of lobbyist disclosure information.
- Increases disclosure of lobbyists' contributions to lawmakers and entities controlled by lawmakers *(such as charities run by a member of Congress, or events honoring a member of Congress.)*

- Requires reporting on lobbyists who “bundle,” or collect campaign checks for members of Congress.
- Requires lobbyists to disclose past executive branch and congressional employment.
- Increases criminal and civil penalties for violating the Lobby Disclosure Act to \$200,000 and five years in prison.
- Extends the lobbying ban on Senators from 1 year to 2 years.

Today's legislation is the conference report of similar House and Senate bills. The Senate passed its original version of the *Honest Leadership, Open Government Act of 2007* by a vote of 96-2 in January.

The House version passed in May by a vote 396-22.

Once today's conference version of the bill passes the Senate, it will then head to the President's desk, where he is expected to sign it.

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